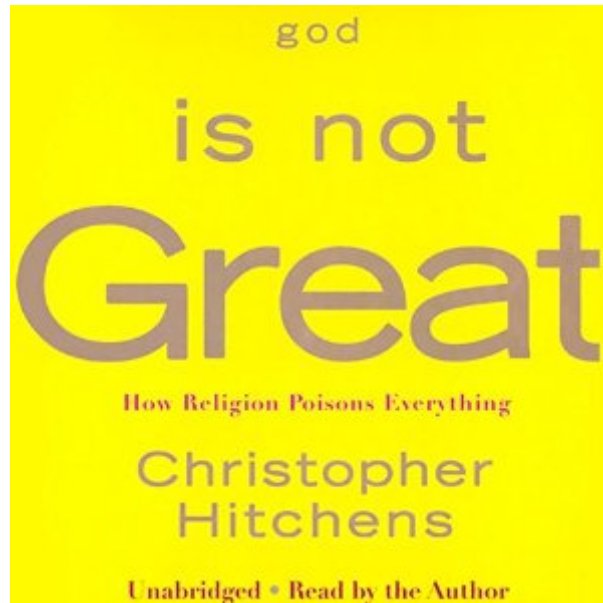


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# God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything



## Synopsis

In the tradition of Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian* and Sam Harris' recent best-seller, *The End of Faith*, Christopher Hitchens makes the ultimate case against religion. With a close and erudite reading of the major religious texts, he documents the ways in which religion is a man-made wish, a cause of dangerous sexual repression, and a distortion of our origins in the cosmos. With eloquent clarity, Hitchens frames the argument for a more secular life based on science and reason, in which hell is replaced by the Hubble Telescope's view of the universe, and Moses and the burning bush give way to the beauty of the double helix.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

After looking through some of the other customer reviews found here, I was dismayed by the amount of "blog-style" entries: that is, people who may have only glanced at the title or saw Hitchens promoting the book on CNN or YouTube and decided to just speak up, either in support or condemnation. However, if you're curious about the book and just want to know what to expect, may I humbly offer some actual information? Hitchens, a contributing editor to *Vanity Fair*, author of books too numerous to mention and contributor to smaller magazines such as *Free Inquiry*, adds to the recent renaissance of pro-atheist books with his own provocatively-titled contribution. Whereas Sam Harris (*The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason*) sees dire warnings and Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*) offers a defense of science, Hitchens uses his long experience in journalism to illustrate the madness that results when faith is unchallenged by reason. Dawkins

has been criticized for adopting a harsh tone (an assessment I disagree with), but Hitchens is the one who really pours on the anger and witty derision.

My favorite part of the book is the last third. By that time Hitchens has made his arguments about how Religion Poisons Everything and is now rebutting the best intellectual arguments against his thesis. What would become of human decency, morality and ethics without religion? How do you address the inherent human need to believe in something and take comfort in a higher power? What are the god-less alternatives and aren't those institutions as bad or worse? Doesn't religion provide stability to society by pacifying individuals in times of darkness and uncertainty? It is hard to sum things up and provide sound bytes about something as complex as religion, but my take-away from this book is that any religion (by design) has the ingredients of becoming totalitarian, when successful; and totalitarianism of any kind leads to ultimate power corruption. Hitchens makes his arguments and rebuts the best counter-arguments with passion and panache. If you are amongst the majority of people in the world - believers - his irreverent sense of humor may lead you to immediately brush him off as a partisan hack; while the unbelievers will get a kick out of each of the thousands of punchlines that Hitchens artfully mumbles. However, if you belong to the third category - an intellectual who chooses to look beyond a bi-polar view of the world when it comes to religion - I would urge patience with Hitchens' indulgence as a genius linguist (when you have it, it is hard not to flaunt it!) and you will find this book extremely rewarding and will not go un-satiated. If you are seriously debating the merits and demerits of religion as an institution in the society we live in, you have glanced at the perfect place, no matter what your affiliations.

When I came to read the reviews (out of curiosity) on , I first went on to read the one-star reviews. I was amused that many have clearly not read the book, but felt that their defense and protection of the faith was necessary. Many voice their maliciously gleeful prophecies of Hitchens ending up in hell alternating with those who in their gracious piety wish him "saved" from this otherwise inevitable fate. Others go into long nervously complex and defensive discourses to draw "aha! now I can rest easy" conclusions as to why Hitchens was all wrong about their specific brand of faith. A stark parallel to how religious texts are designed to make things convoluted and abstruse with riddles within riddles and side-winds for every long-wind with the end result to successfully befuddle and consequently beguile the masses. I do not see this book as a detailed thesis and nor did I expect Hitchens (nor do I think this is possible) to be an expert on each tedious detail relating to every religion. I find this quite irrelevant to the intent of the discourse in the book. Further, I do not see this

as some juvenile battle between the virtues of all believers versus all non-believers. I must add that one big difference between how religion (as opposed to a lack thereof) manages to impact the lives of all is it's need and very mission to impose, interfere, and establish. I see this as a book as something that improves our perspective and understanding of an age-old subject that has a huge bearing on all our lives. It makes us observe and be mindful of our primitive brains, impulses, and tendencies. It forces us to sit back and think of the absurdity in so many of the decisions and interactions we take for granted all around us.

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